

Dear General Law Committee - After attending the public hearing today, I feel compelled to respond and add new testimony about HB5146.

Thank you fo all you do, and I appreciate hearing everyone's perspectives today.

I believe HB5146 needs to be passed.

I agree with Reginald St. Fortcolin and others who testified and know and represent the people most in need - this bill is just a beginning and a Taskforce including those most affected by hunger should be convened to address the root causes of food insecurity in CT.

As Mr. St. Fortcolin said, there should be "no conversation about us without us" - reach out to the most needy of your constituents, ask them what they want.

The concerns expressed by a couple of legislators about the mandates on businesses are spurious - as pointed out by Rep. Borer, we already have mandates in place for businesses to disposal of and recycle many products, from paint to batteries.

Many businesses - supermarkets - already donate food because it saves them money, protects the environment and is the right thing to do. I am so grateful to Stop & Shop and others who consistently donate food and money for the hungry in our communities.

You heard from several business owners who want to do the right thing, and some who expressed that their hands are tied

because there is not a mandate - let's untie their hands and get food to those who need it most.

I know from my husband, a business owner, and many other business owners, that the most helpful thing the government can do to help businesses flourish is provide clear standards, equity and a way for everyone to be good citizens in their communities. It's what we all want.

There is precedent - Mr. Sigal pointed out that this has worked well in New York and California. Let's follow that lead and help our most vulnerable citizens.

While I appreciate very large organizations in the business of providing food, I know from being the director of WHEAT in West Haven from 1982-2005 the Federal and State bureaucracy and red tape involved in being a member agency. It has only grown more arduous in the 17 years since I left WHEAT. This bill allows smaller, grass roots food rescue programs who are more nimble and connected directly to those in need to pick up and distribute food.

As Ms. Bromley stated in her testimony, the obstacles for the most needy and challenged to obtaining food are significant and discouraging. People working long hours at low wage jobs without transportation cannot schedule and get to many food pantries.

As a member of Woodmont United Church of Christ, a former volunteer with CPEN in Newhallville, and a donor to Purple Pantry Boxes and Food2Kids, I see the amazing and

unfortunately necessary work these much smaller, grass roots groups do every day in providing food to the hungry. As Susan Brown, founder of the Purple Pantry boxes in Milford and West Haven says " Give what you can, take what you need" - no business hours, no questions asked, no means test, ID requirements, or signing papers.

Instead of always asking "Do you deserve to eat?"  
Why aren't we, as one of the wealthiest states in the nation, asking "Why are they hungry?"

Do the right thing - pass HB5146, WITH the mandate, set up a Taskforce to address why so many are hungry, and involve the true stakeholders.

In the meantime, I hope you and your loved ones remain well, and never go hungry.

Sincerely, Therese Eke, Milford, CT

of - perhaps most effectively by Atty. Sigal who pointed out that just such a mandate has been in place in New York for over a year now with no ill effect.